

THE CARUTHERS AFFAIR

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CHAPTER I.

"Has Mr. Hendricks returned from Boston?"

"Just this minute, sir," replied the office boy. "He's in the back room getting his mail."

Dr. Lampkin entered the office and sat down in one of the soft leather-covered chairs.

A moment later the detective entered, a package of unopened letters in his hand.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. "Hello, glad to see you!"

"I've been wondering what had become of you," said the doctor, as he rose and shook the disengaged hand of his friend. "Every time I dropped in your office boy told me he was expecting you on the very next train."

"Delayed from hour to hour for nearly two weeks," frowned Hendricks. Then he laughed. "The joke is on me, old man. I had really plumed myself on the reputation I was going to make over there to get even with the Boston papers for sneering at New York's 'big detective,' as they called me, but lo and behold! just as I was about to stir up the phlegmatic old village by showing my hand, my man made a clean breast and gave himself up to the police. Did you ever hear of such luck?"

Lampkin laughed as he took a cigar from the detective's box.

"Anything on hand here?"

"Not a blessed thing. I might forget my awful humiliation if I could plunge into work heels over head."

As the doctor smoked, Hendricks began to open his letters. He had cast aside three and was beginning on the fourth when his visitor saw him start, grasp his beard and pull on it excitedly.

"By Jove!" he cried, and his big gray eyes seemed to expand as they stared at the sheet before them.

"What's up now?" questioned the doctor, leaning forward.

The detective seemed not to hear. He folded the letter, leaned back in his revolving chair, and made a clumsy attempt to prop his feet up on the edge of his willow waste basket, but the frail thing turned over and his heavy heels struck the floor with a hollow sound.

Lampkin studied the strong features of his companion with pleasurable curiosity. He was almost sure that he had detected just the faintest suggestion of horror in his friend's expression, which was indeed a rare thing. Then Hendricks shrugged his shoulders, gave a half defiant dogged laugh and proceeded to open another letter.

He had scarcely drawn it from its envelope, however, when he dropped it and musingly took up the other again. There was silence while he perused it. Then he asked:

"Lampkin, have you ever heard the name of Weldon Caruthers?"

"Haven't you?" returned the doctor, a note of surprise in his voice.

"It seems familiar to me, and yet I can't exactly place it."

"He is one of the ultra swell set," replied Lampkin. "I met him once; he is very well-to-do, a thorough society man—member of the Van Derwerker club and all that sort of thing. I know a lot of interesting gossip about him."

Hendricks fixed the speaker with his sharp eyes.

"I presume you heard of his being murdered in cold blood?" said the detective, tentatively.

"Murdered? Surely you don't mean it!"

"Yes, let me see." Hendricks deliberately consulted the date of the letter in his hand and even more slowly examined the postmark on the envelope.

"Yes, this writer informs me that the crime was committed in Caruthers' apartments in the Palace hotel just a week ago to-night."

The doctor took a deep breath.

"Oh, it's a hoax—a mistake," he said, in relief. "I noticed in this morning's paper that Caruthers was in his box at the Horse Show last night. I was running over the list of men who had the most conspicuous places and remember seeing his name."

"What paper did you see it in?"

Lampkin thought he noticed the peculiar twitching about the corners of the detective's mouth which usually indicated suppressed excitement.

boy laid the paper on the desk. He opened the paper, signaling to the boy to leave the room, and began to turn the leaves with fingers which seemed too clumsy for use.

"Hang it, find it for me!" he said, abruptly.

Lampkin opened the paper at the place devoted to society news, and put his finger on a paragraph.

"There you are," he said. "There's your man who has been dead a week. Now what are you frowning about? One would think Caruthers was a rival of yours that you want put out of the way."

Hendricks drew a deep breath, and handed the letter which had so disturbed him to his friend.

"Read it," he said.

What the doctor saw was a sheet of crisp blue linen paper, and on it the following typewritten words:

"Minard Hendricks, Detective, New York City:

"If you will take the trouble to go to the Palace Hotel to-night after you receive this, and will inquire for Mr. Weldon Caruthers, you will be told that he is out of town, but if you will insist on going to his apartments on the second floor, you will find there his remains. He has been murdered and the job has been done so well that the chief actor in the game has not the slightest fear of detection, and takes this humble opportunity of pitting his wits against yours, not so colored. You are a great detective, Hendricks, and they say you have never failed. But this, my dear sir, shall be your Waterloo."

Lampkin laid the letter down and turned to Hendricks, who stood at his elbow.

"It is plainly an idle joke," he said. "I am astonished at your being disturbed over it."

"Do I look disturbed?" asked Hendricks, absent-mindedly, and turning to a large lounge he threw himself on it. "I am absolutely worn out for one thing, and then—"

He paused. It was plain to the doctor that the detective's mental excitement had crippled his faculty for putting words together.

"Look here," said Lampkin, drawing a chair near his friend and sitting down. "I say, what's the matter with you, anyway?"

Hendricks laughed.

"I may as well tell you the whole truth and unburden myself," he began. "The fact is, doctor, I have never in all my experience had but one thing to really trouble me, and this letter, somehow, seems to be connected with that particular thing. I have never mentioned it to a single soul, except my mother, but she never talks of my affairs, although I really believe that happening has added ten years to her age. To make a long story short, about three months ago after Kola—that East Indian friend of mine—and I had been hard at work all day in my library over some papers connected with the Hilburn murder case, I sent him off and joined my mother at dinner. I always sat at the head of the table in a high-backed chair upholstered in soft leather something like the material on this lounge. That night when I sat down I heard in the deep seat of the chair a fizzing sound, like a rocket getting ready to mount, and smelt the odor of burning powder. With what little presence of mind the good Lord has given me, I sprang up and kicked the chair from me half across the room. It lay there and spluttered for a second and then the little cloud of smoke disappeared from it."

"My mother almost fainted, and I had to look after her, but I returned to the chair in a few moments and carefully carried it out into the cool house. Lampkin, it contained the biggest, most deadly bomb you ever saw. It was a round, polished brass ball about three inches in diameter, of a make I have never seen before. My quick action and the warning the burning fuse gave me saved my life. I carefully drew out the upholsterer's brass-headed tacks, and saw the contrivance to fire the fuse—a spring affair to strike a match when I sat down. Doctor, that thing sends a cold shudder up my spine every time I think of it, and I think of it too often for my peace of mind, I tell you."

"I should think it would worry you," said the doctor. "It certainly was a narrow escape."

"It showed that I had an enemy," was the detective's reply. "And this anonymous communication after three months of silence on his part shows he is still alive and—inventive."

"Ah, I see. You think that letter was a trick to lure you into a trap by some one."

"It has that appearance. The letter was delayed by my absence from town. As I was expecting every hour to get back I did not have my mail forwarded."

"And your absence perhaps saved your life again," added Lampkin.

Hendricks nodded, and gave a grim smile.

"That letter was not written by a fool, doctor, but I must not think of it. I must get to work. Keep your seat. I'll be through soon."

Hendricks, as he spoke, rose and went to his desk again. Lampkin smiled in admiration when he saw his friend's face clear as he plunged into his correspondence. Presently, however, he caught Hendricks' glance as it roved absently round the room.

"Come, come," chided the doctor, "you are thinking of that letter and the bomb again."

"Not that exactly," the detective said, "but all at once it has occurred to me that I haven't given my anonymous correspondent a fair showing. He says Caruthers has been murdered and we haven't really a bit of actual proof that he is lying."

"But," cried Lampkin, remonstratingly, "the letter was written a week ago, and to-day's paper says he was at the Horse Show last night."

"Papers are not infallible," said Hendricks, tapping his call bell. "Something in the general tone of this communication makes me think that the writer really meant to furnish me with a grewsome exhibition in Caruthers' apartments. My invitation comes late, but I am going to accept."

The office boy came in.

"Bring me to-day's Herald, quick!" Hendricks commanded with quite a change of tone.

This time, as the detective took the paper and began to open it, all his customary calmness and deliberate shrewdness seemed to settle on him. For a moment his penetrating gaze rested on the "Notes of the Horse Show." Then he grunted significantly as he took up a pencil and drew a circle around a short paragraph.

"There!" he ejaculated. "You see this paper says Caruthers did not occupy his box last night; that, as he was out of town, the box was courteously extended to Count Bantini and his party—Miss Huntington, her aunt, and other ladies."

Lampkin rose, an incredulous expression on his face, and leaned over the paper. He started to speak, but Hendricks had suddenly dropped his hand on the call-bell with considerable force.

"What is it, sir?" asked the boy, from the portals of the door leading into the ante-room.

"To-day's Sun," said the detective, giving his friend a strange look.

When the boy had brought the paper Hendricks looked over the Horse Show news most deliberately.

"No mention of Caruthers here whatever," he said, finally. "Doctor, what time is it?"

"Eleven o'clock," said the doctor. "Do you want me to leave?"

The detective reached for his overcoat.

"Come walk over to the Palace hotel with me."

"Are you going to make inquiries there?"

"I shall at least find out if Caruthers has returned," rejoined Hendricks, re-

luctantly, just a touch of evasion in his tone. "You see, he may have an enemy who really intended to harm him in some way, a week ago, and in such a matter a man ought to be put on his guard."

"Of course," answered Lampkin. "You are quite right."

The detective thrust his hand into his pocket for his gloves and drew them out in a disreputable wad.

"I'd like to ascertain, too, if this letter was written by my avowed enemy. You see, I'd go a good many lengths to get even the faintest clew to his identity."

As the two friends turned into sight of the twelve-story hotel, they saw in front of it a long line of fashionable carriages from which were alighting men and ladies in evening dress.

"Swell blow-out," commented Hendricks. "Doctor, we ought to have on our swallow-tails and white neckties."

"I have almost given up that sort of thing," replied the doctor. "My principal amusement nowadays seems to be watching you at your work. If that eastern chap, Kola, hadn't won your heart so completely, I'd have given up my own aims and tried to become your right bower."

"You are that already, old man," returned the detective. "But Kola can't be depended on. When it suits him he works with me like a prairie on fire, but often when I have the most important matters on hand I find him in his old rat-hole of a den, drugged to his eyes in the suffocating smoke and odor of incense, and moving about in his gray robe and cowl like a half-mummified monk. Ugh! he gives me the all-overs."

"You have never told me much about him," said the doctor. "The time I met him during your investigations of the Benton murder case he interested me greatly."

Hendricks shook his head.

"I don't go much on what can't be explained to my full satisfaction, and I can't explain Kola. When I ask him to turn the light on his queer mode of life he grins, shakes his head and says it would take 20 years of study and ascetic living in the east to comprehend even the rudimentary part of his outlandish philosophy. I didn't tell him I was going to Boston, and he may feel miffed at me, but he'll get over it."

By this time they had reached the side entrance to the hotel, and they went into the crowded office, from which, in several directions, ran ap-

pas corridors, the walls of which were adorned with costly paintings and sculpture. Through an open door they had a glimpse of the white and gold ballroom. The music of a Hungarian orchestra swelled out from a balcony overhead, and throngs of men and women passed to and fro through the corridors. Hendricks sank into a big chair near the doorway leading into the Turkish smoking room, and by a downward motion of his hand signified his desire for Lampkin to sit beside him. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

SAMPLES OF IRISH WIT.

Pat's Ready Tongue Maintains Its Reputation for Putting People in Good Humor.

Two laborers set out from Wexford to walk to Dublin. By the time they reached Bray they were very tired with their journey, and the more so when they were told they were still 12 miles from Dublin. "Be me sowl," said one, after a little thought, "sure, it's but six miles apiece! Let us walk on."

During a discussion at a meeting of the Trinity College Historical society upon the slight consideration attached to life by uncivilized nations, a speaker mentioned the extraordinary circumstance that in China if a man were condemned to death he could easily hire a substitute to die for him. "And," the debater went on, "I believe many poor fellows get their living by acting as substitutes in that way!"

A child went crying to its mother and reported that it had swallowed a button. "Well, well, look at that now!" cried the woman. "Begor, I suppose the next thing you'll do is to swallow a button-hole!" This reminds me of the graphic description by a beggar man of his tattered coat: "Faith, yer honner, it's nothin' but a parcel of holes sewn together."

A curious peculiarity of the Irish nature is the wide limits to which relationship is extended. "Do you know Pat Meehan?" a peasant was asked. "Of course I do," was the answer. "Why, he's a near relation of mine. He wance proposed for my sister Kate."

"Well, Mick," said the friend, "I've heard some queer stories about your doings lately." "Och, don't believe them, sir," replied Mick. "Sure, half the lies told about me by the neighbors isn't true!"

A clergyman told me that he has a parishioner who is much addicted to drink. Meeting the man one day when, as the people say, "he had a drop in," the priest insisted that he should take the pledge, for it was the only protection against the temptations of the public house. "You've never seen a teetotaler drunk, Tom," said the priest. "Ah, your reverence," replied Tom, "I've seen many a man drunk, but I couldn't tell for the life o' me whether they wor teetotalers or not!"—London Spectator.

Florida is America's Winter Garden. No ice. No snow. Conveniently reached from all points via Plant System. For particulars write L. A. Bell, 205 Clark Street, Chicago.

It is surprising how well a homely girl looks in a picture.—Aitchison Globe.

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Wise people are also rich when they know a perfect remedy for all annoying diseases of the blood, kidneys, liver and bowels. It is Hood's Sarsaparilla, which is perfect in its action. It so regulates the entire system as to bring vigorous health. It never disappoints.

Coltre—"For 42 years I had coltre, or swellings on my neck, which was discouraging and troublesome. Rheumatism also annoyed me. Hood's Sarsaparilla cured me completely and the swelling has entirely disappeared. A lady in Michigan saw my previous testimonial and used Hood's and was entirely cured of the same trouble. She thanked me for recommending it." Mrs. ANNA SUTHERLAND, 406 Lovel Street, Kalamazoo, Mich.

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Hood's Pills cure liver ills, non-irritating and the only cathartic to take with Hood's Sarsaparilla.

Some persons have done a great deal to run down cyclists and, on the other hand, some cyclists have done a good deal to run down other persons.—L. A. W. Bulletin.

Disagreeable February. The discomforts of this month can be escaped by taking advantage of the winter excursions of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad to one of the many pleasant resorts of the South. This line offers unsurpassed facilities for reaching the cities in the South, the winter resorts of the beautiful Gulf Coast, of Florida, of California, and of the West Indies. Write C. P. Atmore, General Passenger Agent, Louisville, Ky., for folders descriptive of Florida or the Gulf Coast.

There are too many of us who imagine that an iron-clad resolution, born every few hours, is all there is to being economical.—Aitchison Globe.

Crescent Hotel, Huron Springs, Arkansas. Opens February 23. In the Ozark Mountains. Delightful climate. Beautiful scenery. Unequaled medicinal waters. Cheap excursion rates. Through sleepers via Frisco Line. Address J. O. Plank, Manager, Room H, Arcadia Century Building, or Frisco Ticket Office, No. 101 N. Broadway, St. Louis, Mo.

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TIME TABLES.

W. & L. E.	
In effect Sunday, November 13, 1898.	
WEST.	
Train No. 4 Daily.....	10:35 am
" " 6 Daily (except Sunday)....	3:30 pm
Train No. 40 Local 10:34 a. m.	
EAST.	
Train No. 1 Daily (except Sunday)....	10:34 am
Train No. 3 Daily.....	4:14 pm
Train No. 43 Local 8:15 a. m.	

BIG FOUR.	
WEST.	
19—Col. Cin. Ind. & St. L.....	8:54 am
33—Daily St. L. Ex.....	2:34 pm
27—Col. Ex.....	5:34 pm
37—Daily Col. & Cin. Ex.....	10:00 am
51—Local Freight.....	9:50 am
35—Wellington Ex. (Sunday only)....	9:50 am
EAST.	
25—Daily Col. & Cin. Ex.....	5:36 am
26—Gallion Ex.....	8:11 am
30—Daily Col. Ind. & St. L. Ex.....	1:39 pm
34—Wellington Ex.....	4:54 pm
2—Daily Col. Cin. & Ind. Ex.....	8:19 pm
52—Local Freight.....	5:34 pm

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